

Community Survey Results

Lakewood Community Relations Advisory Commission

MAY 2021

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Background & Objectives

Lakewood Community Relations Advisory Commission (LCRAC) is a group of volunteer residents serving in an advisory capacity for the purpose of educating, informing, and making recommendations to city officials on matters related to community relations in an effort to advance respect for diversity, equality, and bonds of mutuality. Our mission is to ensure Lakewood remains a great place to live and work **for everyone**.

LCRAC has asked assistance from Lakewood residents in guiding our efforts in a direction that matters to all of us. The questionnaire was designed to help us work toward building a better, more responsive and engaged community for all of Lakewood.

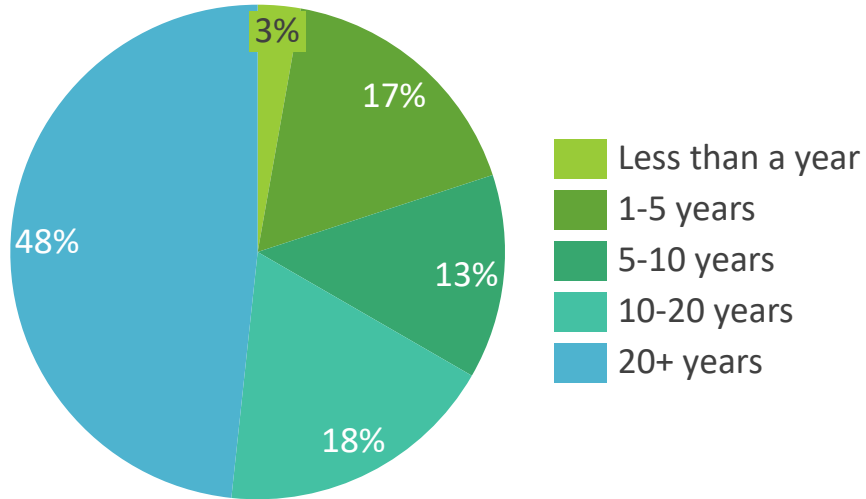
Summary of Findings

- Our community survey engaged a total of 647 residents (1.3% of the population) in Lakewood, from a variety of backgrounds (age, ethnicity, years lived in Lakewood)
- For the most part, residents feel that Lakewood is a welcoming community; 88% of respondents (567) enjoy the amenities that the city provides
- There are a great number of suggestions for the city's leadership to consider so that it will continue to attract a diverse and dynamic populace
 - Affordable & accessible housing
 - Accessibility for all public spaces & businesses
 - Addressing racial bias and fostering appreciation for diversity
 - Improving neighborhood engagement and involvement

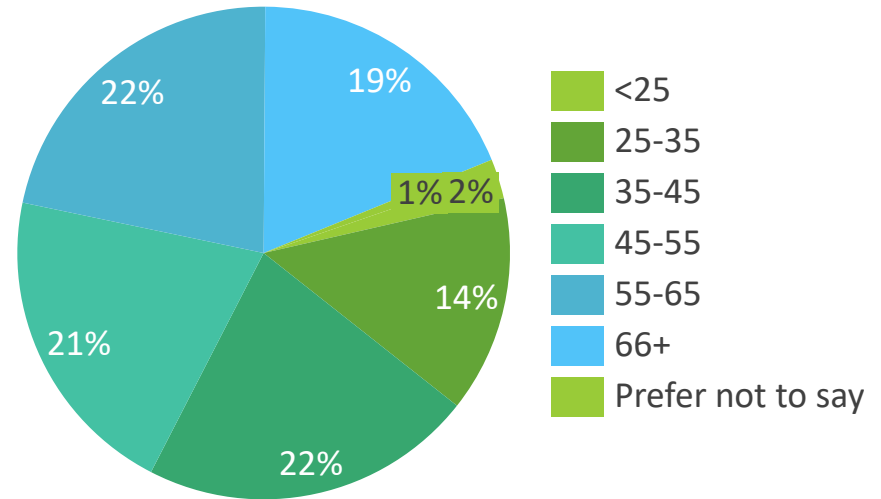
I. Respondent Demographics

Our survey reached longtime and new residents across a variety of age groups

How long have you lived in Lakewood?

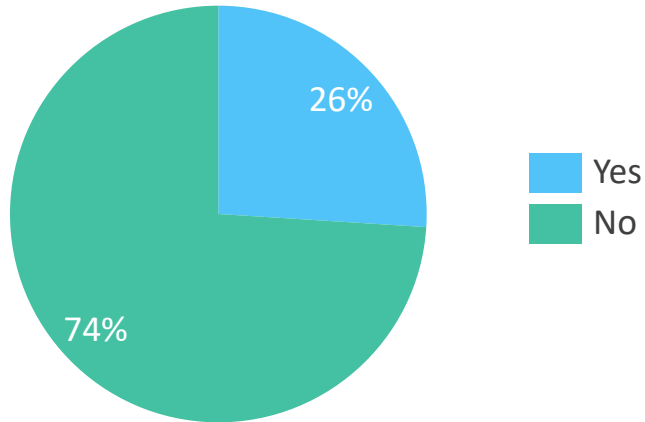


What age group do you belong to?

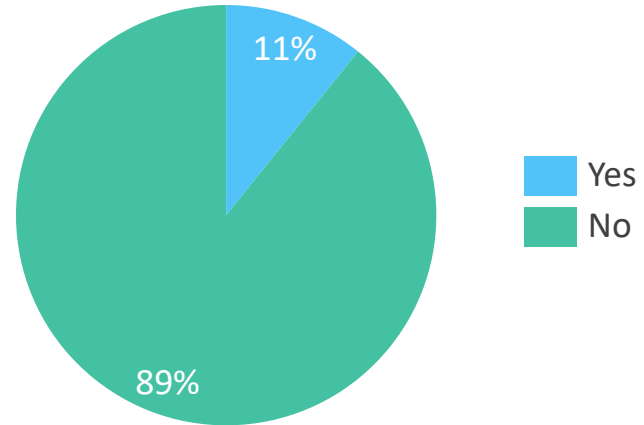


Most respondents don't currently have kids in the school system
and are not business owners

**Do you have children enrolled in
Lakewood Public Schools?**

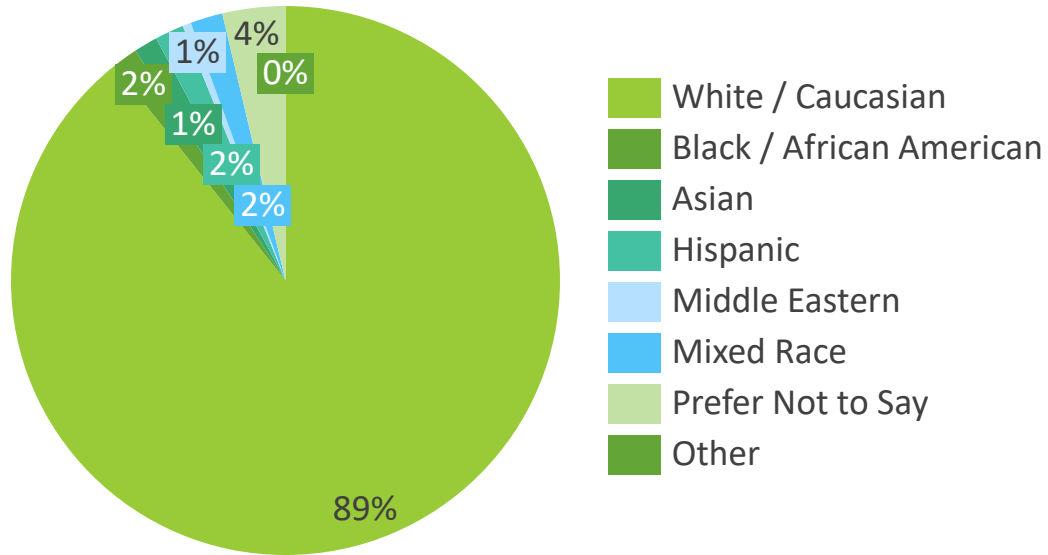


**Do you own a small business in
Lakewood?**



We reached different ethnic groups, but Black and Hispanic residents were not as represented as census data would predict

Which ethnic / racial group do you identify with?



Comparison to Census Data

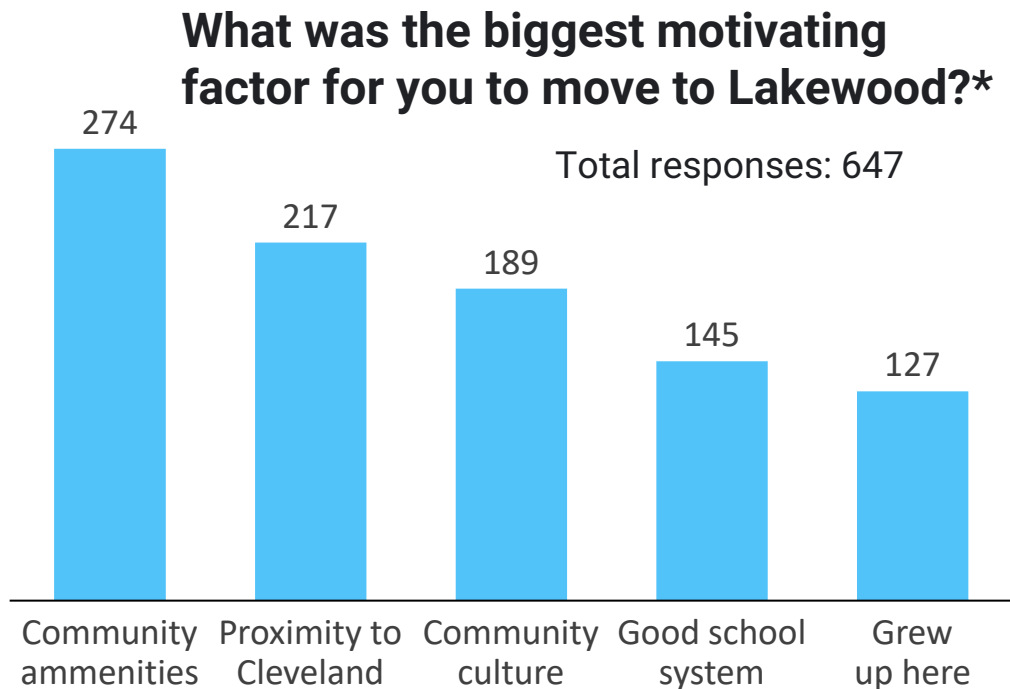
Survey	Census
89.2%	87.7%
1.5%	5.6%
1.4%	2%
1.7%	5.4%
0.5%	N/A
1.9%	4%
3.7%	N/A
0%	N/A

The city should consider finding ways to receive input from *everyone*

- As the city's leadership is not completely reflective of the diversity present in Lakewood, LCRAC believes it is critical for those in power to actively consider the systems and processes in place to get input from underrepresented groups (e.g., ethnic minorities)
- While our survey reached a diverse group of individuals, LCRAC recognizes that important groups were underrepresented and may have skewed results; city leadership should consider alternative approaches to engaging with these hard-to-reach groups
 - Renters
 - Under age 25
 - Black and Hispanic

II. Community Culture

Community amenities were the most cited reason why residents decided to move to Lakewood



Other factors from write-in responses:

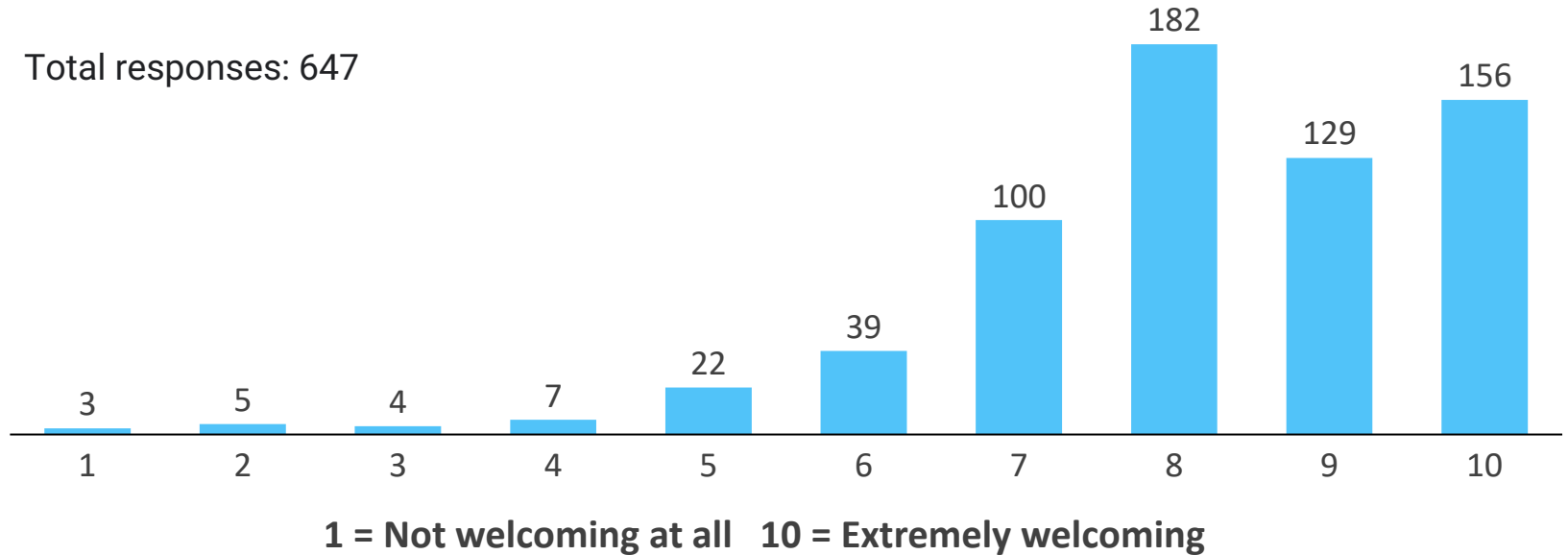
- Housing availability
- Work
- Moved in with partner / family
- Walkability

*respondents could select more than one option

Most agree that Lakewood is a welcoming place

On a scale of 1 – 10, how welcoming would you say Lakewood is?

Total responses: 647

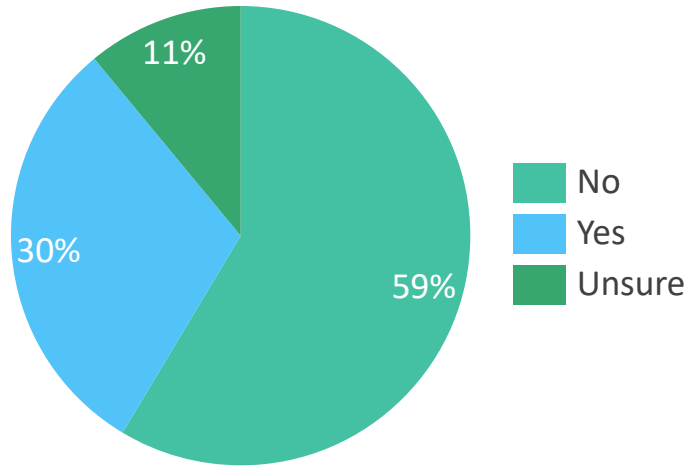


City leadership should work to preserve Lakewood's welcoming culture

- Community culture is one of the top reasons why people move to Lakewood; the city must take steps to ensure the welcoming culture is preserved to continue to attract residents
- City leadership should consider implementing additional welcoming programs for new residents (both renters and homeowners)
- The city can consider expanding the Block Club to include social interactions and resident engagement
- We recognize that budget constraints exist, and that low and no cost solutions should be explored when possible; in addition, we can leverage assets such as the Lakewood Family Room, Library, YMCA, schools and recreation programs to better include hard-to-reach Lakewood residents (renters, people of color, youth) to ensure that they feel welcome and that their concerns are seen and addressed

~30% of all respondents report witnessing discrimination or racism in Lakewood

Have you witnessed and/or experienced racism and/or discrimination in Lakewood?

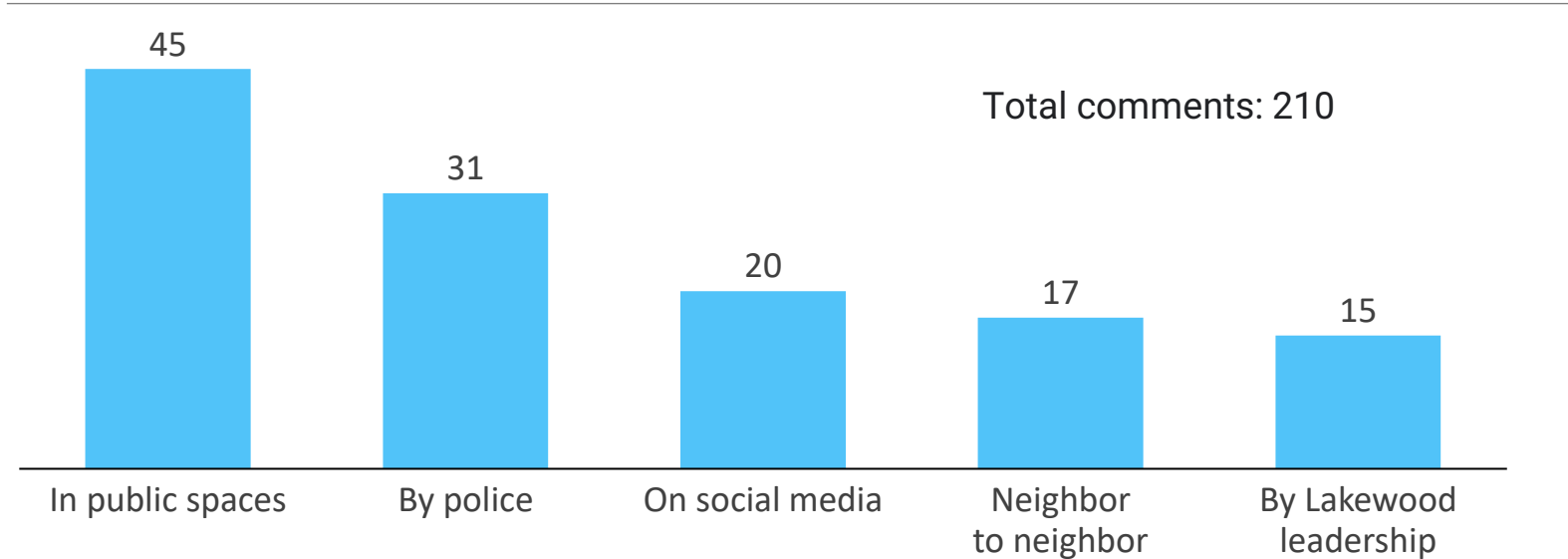


Though most people rate Lakewood as a welcoming place, **LCRAC believes that *any* discrimination or racism, however minor is unacceptable**

LCRAC received a total of **210** comments on witnessed acts of discrimination or racism

60% of Black and 54% of Mixed-Race respondents reported witnessing / experiencing racism or discrimination

Racist / discriminatory behavior was perpetrated in a variety of interactions and settings

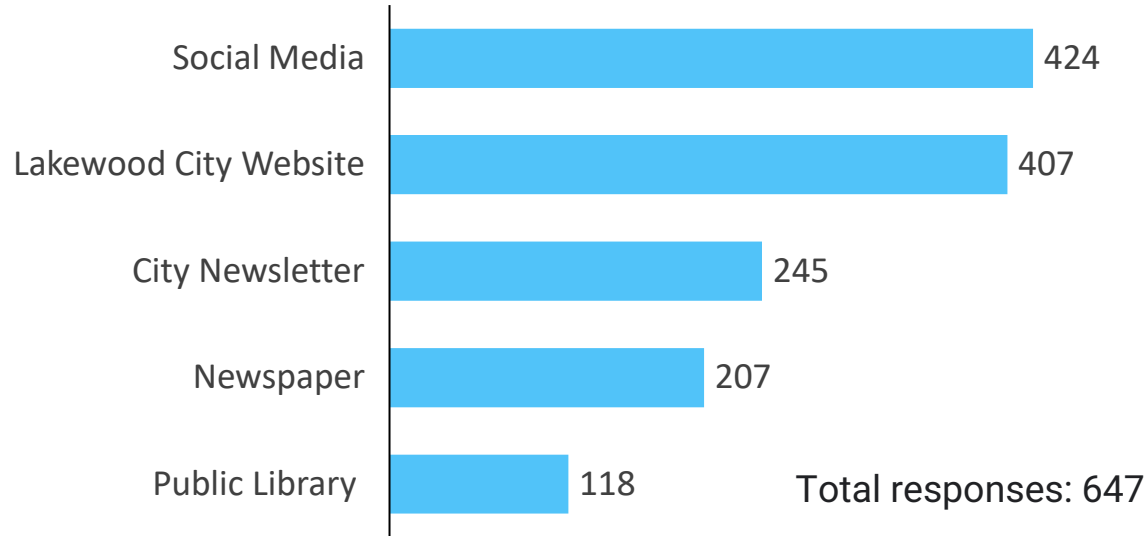


LCRAC suggests city leadership review residents' responses on this topic

III. Community Engagement

Social media is the #1 way residents stay up to date on city announcements and activities

Where do you get information about city services and activities?

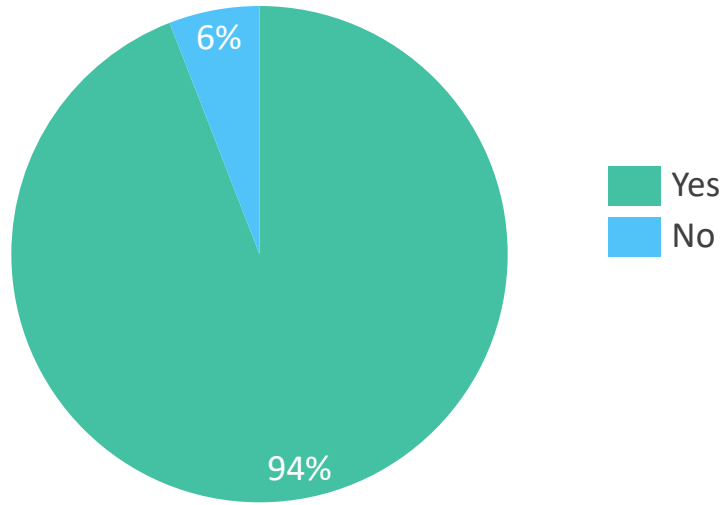


Other sources of information cited:

- Friends / family
- LakewoodAlive
- Water bill
- Email lists
- Neighbors

Survey respondents reported having reliable internet

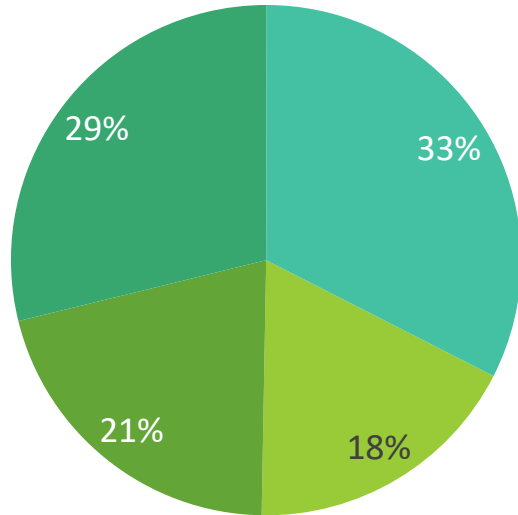
Do you have steady access to reliable internet?



2015 - 2019 census data for Lakewood indicates that **85.3%** of residents have broadband internet subscription; the vast majority of survey respondents have reliable internet but this may not exactly mirror the Lakewood population as our survey was mostly distributed through digital channels (e.g., social media, email lists)

A significant portion of Lakewood could benefit from greater awareness of the City Block Club program

Are you familiar with the City's Block Club Initiative?



- Yes, and my block has one
- Yes, but my block does not have one I am aware of
- No, but I would like to learn more
- No

61.4% of respondents have never heard of the City Block Club program

City leadership should leverage digital platforms to foster additional community engagement in Lakewood

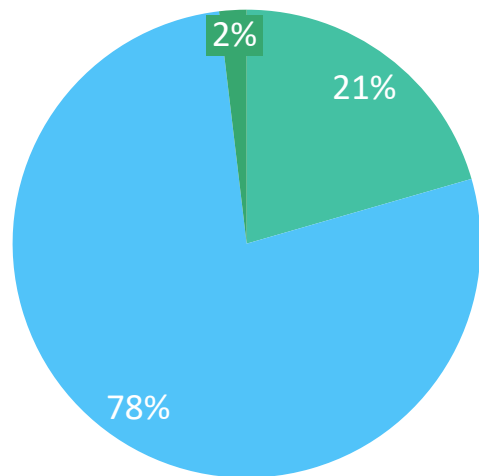
Suggestions from Survey Respondents:

- Over **100 people** offered suggestions on how to improve community engagement in Lakewood; many people noted the need to double down on city-wide communication efforts
- As most people receive their information digitally, city officials should ensure that they are updating their platforms (e.g., social media pages, websites) regularly and accurately
- Simultaneously, the city must also have robust reporting mechanisms in print formats for those who do not receive their information digitally
- City leadership should consider reformatting the city website to be more intuitive and more effective at communicating relevant information

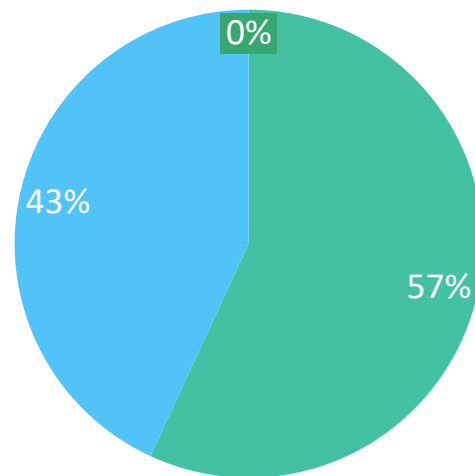
IV. Housing & Affordability

Most survey respondents are homeowners, which is different from what census data shows for Lakewood

Regarding housing, do you rent or own in Lakewood?



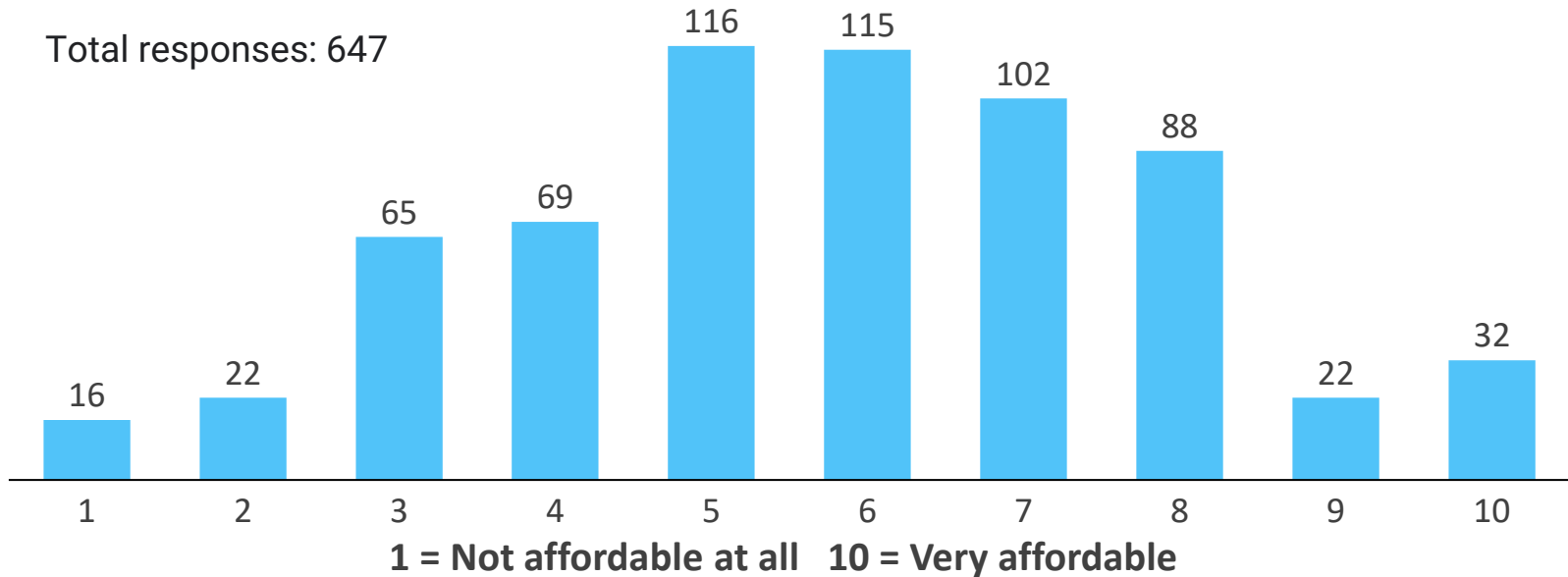
Lakewood Census Comparison



Lakewood is rated as moderately affordable

On a scale of 1 – 10, how affordable do you think it is to live in Lakewood?

Total responses: 647



Many people noted affordability is becoming an issue

- **26.6% or 172** of respondents rated Lakewood as NOT affordable (1-4 on 10 point scale)
- Particular issues that were frequently raised include:
 - Taxes being too high - 42 comments
 - Lack of affordable and/or safe housing - 46 comments
 - Insufficient options for senior / disabled persons - 12 comments
- Additionally, respondents noted that rising rent prices are forcing some people (e.g., those on disability, refugees, etc.) out of the community

“Affordable housing is becoming an issue. Some people are struggling to afford to live here”

“Lakewood can provide more affordable housing. Escalating housing prices exclude lower economic groups, young working-class families”

City leadership could consider steps to engage renters, ensure Lakewood stays affordable, and appropriate housing options are available

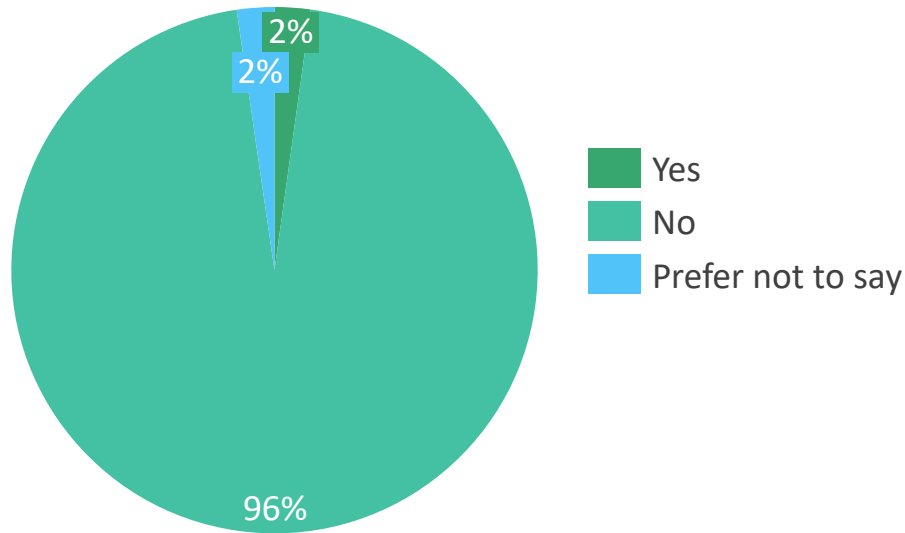
Suggestions from Survey Respondents:

- Look at future housing developments and assess their accessibility for disabled / senior residents
- Consider rent hike protections, particularly for those in a low income bracket
- Develop some sort of mechanism to engage renters effectively; renters are 56.9% of Lakewood residents so it is critical for city officials to be able to reach and gather input from them

V. Accessibility

Most respondents did not report struggling with accessibility

Do you have a disability that prevents you from physically accessing any public space or building in Lakewood?



4.2% of respondents indicate having a challenge with accessibility

Lakewood census data indicates that **9.3%** of people below the age of 65 have a disability

Still, certain areas were noted as problematic

- Certain areas were called out to improve accessibility in Lakewood
 - Public buildings with lack of ramps or ramps that are too steep
 - Pedestrian crossings on major roads (e.g., on Bunts Rd to connect senior apartments to Giant Eagle)
 - Improve snow removal on sidewalks throughout the city
 - Identify and communicate first level housing options for senior citizens
 - Restaurants without wheelchair access ramps

“Accessibility on sidewalks is a huge issue in winter”

“Buildings that only have stairs at entrances are hard to access”

“Wheelchairs can’t get into some retail / restaurants”

City leadership should consider additional measures to improve accessibility in Lakewood

Suggestions from Survey Respondents:

- Look at future housing developments and assess their accessibility for disabled / senior residents
- Review cross walks / snow removal efforts near areas of senior living
- Review heavily trafficked areas (e.g., Madison Ave, Detroit Ave / Downtown, major grocery stores, Lakewood Park, etc.) for proper access

Closing Remarks

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- The community engagement survey LCRAC has piloted this year can be a great tool for helping city officials prioritize and focus their efforts in addressing the concerns of Lakewood residents; the city should consider repeating this exercise every 2 – 3 years
- LCRAC encourages members of city government to independently review the survey responses to gain a deeper understanding of the community's comments and needs at this time
- Lakewood is recognized by many as being a welcoming and dynamic place to live; that being said, there are several opportunities for the city to implement improvements so that everyone in Lakewood can feel at home

Appendix

LCRAC Members

Walter Wright

Tracy Greenberg

Jon Gromek

Neil Chavan

Gwendolyn Seckers

Ella Sutcliffe

Lise Stevens

Stacy Loejos

Rachel Donaldson

Camile Bragg

Jasany Jenkins

Tariq Ata

Full Survey Results

The following link can be used to access full results of LCRAC's community survey.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18kG2rLKS-45fYJZra104rl2G8DvlxonazQo-gTC9tMI/edit?usp=sharing>

The first tab of the worksheet ("Full Responses") provides survey questions (top bar) and individual responses without prior sorting. In the subsequent tabs of the worksheet, responses are sorted based on various themes according to questions in the survey (e.g., affordability, accessibility, discrimination, etc.).

Survey Methodology

Members of LCRAC worked together to distribute this survey through multiple channels:

- Digital: Social media, email lists
- Print: Lakewood Public Library, select leasing offices, select stores / community organizations



Printed surveys were collected and the digital survey was closed after one month of distribution, after which commission members spent several weeks organizing and synthesizing insights from the responses.